

*News Release from Congressman*

# ROB SIMMONS

SECOND DISTRICT, CONNECTICUT

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## SIMMONS QUESTIONS PACIFIC COMMANDER ON TAIWAN SUBS

### *Admiral Fallon Says it Makes Sense to Break Up Sub Package*

WASHINGTON – Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, today heard from the admiral in charge of U.S. armed forces in the Pacific that he agrees with the Congressman that the stalled deal to sell submarines to Taiwan should be adjusted to make it more attractive to the island democracy. In testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Admiral William J. Fallon, Commander of U.S. Pacific Command, said it makes sense to “take a chunk out of that elephant,” a reference to a \$12 billion block sale that has choked up the government in Taipei.

During the hearing, Simmons asked the four-star admiral why the current proposal could not be split into smaller parts. Simmons, who recently returned from Taiwan, said leaders there asked, “Why do we have to commit to \$12 billion not knowing what it is? Why don't we commit to the design work, the detailed design work, for a couple hundred million dollars? And that gives us a benchmark to know how and whether we should proceed. In other words, if you're going to build a house, show me the plans. I'll pay for the plans and once I see the plans, I'll decide whether I go forward with the house, whether it'll be three stories or two stories, bed rooms etc, etc. Would you comment on that proposal please?”

Fallon replied, “Congressman, I'm not familiar at all with the details of the construction business or the role the U.S. Navy might play in any of that. But I will tell you that I'm a little bit surprised at the business of the \$12 billion; as you characterized, it seems it's either an all or nothing thing. I am all for making progress in this area, and I don't know that there's any requirement or restriction legislative or otherwise that would preclude the Taiwanese from taking a chunk out of that elephant; and I have been trying since I've been in this job to encourage them to do something, to make some moves rather than nothing, which is what's happened so far.”

Fallon added: “I don't quite understand why they couldn't consider a decision that could say ‘let's take a chunk of this material that's been proposed by our country and get on with it.’”

As the sales package is currently structured, Taiwan, a country of 23 million, must appropriate \$12 billion before the Department of Defense will allow work to begin in earnest. Simmons says that DOD can and should work with the Taiwan government to divide the package into stages, with design work coming early on. Such a procedure is common in the Pentagon's Foreign Military Sales office.

The Dept. of Defense maintains that Taiwan has a pressing requirement for submarines. President Bush

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approved the sale of eight diesel submarines to Taiwan in April 2001.

The Taiwan navy currently has four submarines, but two are more than 60 years old. The People's Republic of China has roughly 60 submarines total.

Simmons has long argued that additional submarines in Taiwan's hands would help offset China's quickly growing military capabilities. "It seems to me," Simmons said, "that if we have allies in the Far East and elsewhere who wish to purchase from us diesel submarines, that we should be stepping up to the plate."

During the hearing, Simmons also said that the U.S. Navy's plan to shift submarines from East Coast bases to the West was a band-aid solution to an insufficient build-rate. "We are moving submarines from a 50-50 to a 60-40 West-East split – 60-percent in the Pacific, 40-percent in the Atlantic," the lawmaker explained. "We're doing that because, in my opinion, we don't have enough submarines."

Rep. Simmons is Vice Chairman of the Projection Forces subcommittee, with oversight of naval and shipbuilding matters. He is also co-chairman of the Congressional Submarine Caucus, with Rep. Jim Langevin (D-RI).

Simmons multi-pronged plan to curb layoffs at the Electric Boat Corporation includes a legislative push to initiate funding for two submarines per year in next year's defense budget as well as efforts to bring Taiwan sub work to EB.

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